

Statement of Grant Purpose

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Children can bring such creative ideas, thinking beyond logic, in ways that adults have forgotten how to do. This is why working with children is one of the most rewarding jobs in the world. You can re-learn how to think imaginatively as a child and in return equip them to share their thoughts with the world. Children have an important voice too, a point many educators and authors are realizing and trying to communicate through their work.

Working in smaller Malaysian communities will allow me to connect on a deep level with the children to learn about their culture so I may engineer my curriculum for their specific needs and interests. I plan to build upon my research of the Malaysian culture by seeing local performances, studying dances such as the ngajat or dramas celebrating Malaysian agriculture, asking my professors and friends who have lived or worked extensively about the culture there so I may understand beyond my appreciation thus far. My previous work overseas instructing students, has equipped me with various teaching strategies for children from multiple backgrounds. I learned how to adapt quickly in a classroom by observing and listening to my students. Through my experience with various education systems, I have learned when there are obstacles such as language differences, there are other avenues to communicate when teaching, such as body language and expression. Previously in Honduras and in Belize I also included illustrating ideas through pictures, sounds, objects, and acting out situations when words would not suffice.

Teaching through Drama Kids International, who believes “the difference is dramatic” when students involve themselves in drama from a young age, also demanded varied curriculum. I used strategies from some of the classes I have taken such as “Early English Learners” which helped me learn to search for multicultural and multilingual books, activities, and curriculum. For example, instead of simply reciting the English letters of the alphabet by rote, as a class we could shape the letters with our bodies to learn them kinesthetically. In camp, I fused academic standards with theater instruction to create a final performance which tracked student academic growth each week and showcased their abilities. English and Theater can work interdependently by studying dramatic literature, using theatrical exercises to practice grammar, or writing and then acting it out to develop critical life skills students need to acquire to thrive in a highly globalized society.

Working in Malaysia will allow me for the first time to combine all three of my primary passions and professional philosophy into one position; providing service to others, improving education, and advocacy for students participating in performing arts for an essential part of their development. This experience will set a foundation for my future career teaching diverse classrooms no matter what subject I may teach. I plan to pursue theatre as I attempt to tell the story of others with my diverse experiences I will gain in Malaysia, go on to teach children how to bring their unique experiences into the classrooms and express them through art as well.

I hope to build a curriculum incorporating theatre techniques for students to build confidence and social skills along with traditional academics so they may develop into strong, assured individuals. It is my understanding that in Eastern education systems, students are tracked at an early age, having to apply to secondary schools. If I use drama to help students use their creative thinking to transfer into skills which can help them understand their abilities and utilize them sooner, then even the less fortunate students can succeed academically and professionally. As the Greek theatre mantra explains, one must “know thyself” in order to truly achieve and thrive alongside others in this fast-paced, advancing world.